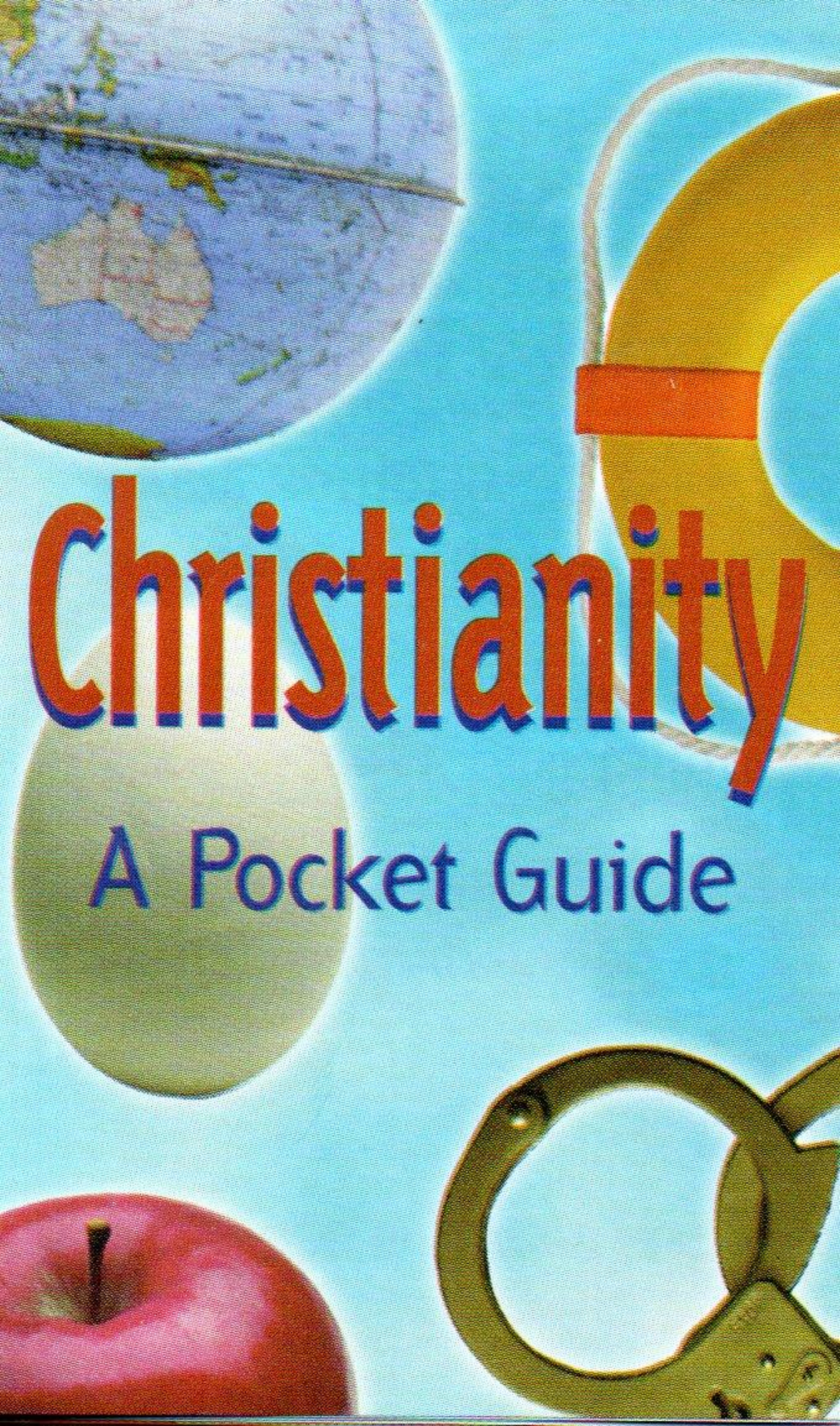




Christianity

A Pocket Guide

Are you on the right track?

Creation

In the beginning, God created the world, including human beings. Everything and everyone belongs to him. (see Genesis 1:1)

Humans defy God

Before long, however, the first people had turned their backs on God, and today it is still the same. The result: God's judgement. (see Romans 5:12)

Promise of a new start

God then unfolded across the centuries a rescue plan for his world, pointing ultimately to the sending of a great saviour. (see Jeremiah 31:31 & 33)

Judgement

The final destiny of those who continue to reject God is his rejection of them. He condemns all who remain outside his rescue plan. (see Acts 17:30 & 31)

As this overview shows, the Bible gives a complete world view: God's view of life from start to eternity...

LIFE

Jesus

True to plan, God's Son came as promised and died for sinners, rising again and winning eternal life for all who trust in him, even today. (see Romans 4:25)

DEATH

BIBLE TIMELINE

Old Testament

New Testament

Eternity

1. God has spoken

Many people today think a Christian is someone who tries to live a good life, who accepts there is a God, or goes to church. In reality, none of these by themselves makes a person a Christian.

Rather than rely on guesswork, we need to listen to God himself, who has spoken on the subject in **the Bible**. As the one true source of knowledge about God, the Bible stands alone. It is the very word of God himself and states its purpose like this: *these things are written that you may believe Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name* (John 20:31).

2. He is our Maker and loving Master

God has spoken clearly about himself, in his Son Jesus Christ. Becoming a Christian centres on our response to this unique figure.

The Bible makes clear Jesus is no ordinary person. His birth was by the power of God, and he performed many documented miracles. He claimed to be the only Son of God (John 19:7): our maker, God himself, in the flesh. Then he rose bodily from the dead — and as the living Lord, has the right to be master of all.

This includes us. We were created to love him, the **one true God**, with all our heart, soul, mind and strength (Mark 12:30).

3. Our defiance spells endless trouble

Next, however, God has spoken about us and our sin. In essence, we have all tried to defy him, doubting his word and preferring our own way.

The Bible says every single one of us is guilty of denying him like this, of trying to ignore him (Romans 3:23). It shows up in our failure to do right, and our frequent acts of wrong. Because of this, our world is full of problems.

To treat Jesus this way is a crime punishable by death (Romans 6:23), and God will one day bring to account all who continue to defy him. Without exception, our sin incurs God's wrath and puts us under his **judgement** (Acts 17:31). Unless...

Your questions matter...

Is the Bible trustworthy?

Historians outside the Bible (such as Tacitus and Josephus) mention Jesus and archeological ruins around Israel verify Biblical records. The internal consistency of the Bible is convincing, with some 66 books by 40 different authors spanning 1000 years, displaying a remarkable unity, inspired by the Spirit of God.

Did Jesus really rise from the dead?

Nobody could have stolen the body, as it was guarded by soldiers and a heavy boulder. Once risen, he appeared to many eyewitnesses (1 Corinthians 15:4-8), including 500 at once — they couldn't all have been hallucinating. These same witnesses were later willing to die for their belief that Jesus was alive.

What gives life ultimate meaning?

The future reckoning of God means our life, with all its joy and suffering, is ultimately accountable to someone. This is good news in one sense, for it means all the world's wrongs will one day be put right. But it's bad news if we have no protection on that day: the Bible speaks of hell, a terrible condemnation (Matthew 10:28).

4. Jesus: punished in our place

God has not only spoken, he has also acted to remedy the situation. God loves us so much, he sent his Son to this planet 2000 years ago. Jesus became man, as human as you and me, yet lived faithfully — the way we were meant to, blameless before God.

Jesus came to provide the single means of divine pardon: by his innocent death on the cross in our place, he was taking the punishment we deserve for ignoring God. His resurrection is God's stamp of approval to this.

It means we can be **forgiven**, when we turn around and stop defying him. The Bible puts it like this: *God demonstrates his own love for us in this: while we were still sinners Christ died for us* (Romans 5:8).

Q A Is Christianity the only way to God?

Today it has become common to assert that all religions are basically the same. Or that we can gain God's acceptance by being a 'good' person. Yet Jesus claimed to be 'the way, the truth and the life', saying 'no one comes to the Father but by me' (John 14:6). The cross of Christ is unique: it alone offers forgiveness as a free gift to be received. God's approval is not a reward we can earn ourselves.

5. Turn and trust him

All this means there is no middle ground. Each of us is on the 'JUDGEMENT' track (see reverse side) before we respond to Jesus. It leads to death. You will stay on that doomed path simply by doing nothing about Christianity.

To switch to the 'JESUS' track and gain eternal life, we must make a permanent decision to take God at his word, trust in his forgiveness and surrender to his direction. It is a new resolve to **turn and follow** Jesus as personal ruler and rescuer. In summary, *whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him* (John 3:36).

Q A Can I be a Christian without church?

Going to church doesn't make you a Christian, any more than walking into a golf club makes you a golfer. But once you decide to follow Christ, you will want to meet with other believers. In the Bible, believing always implies belonging. A 'Christian' without a church is like a sailor without a ship, or a bee without a hive: unthinkable.

To become a Christian

Accept and act upon God's message in the Bible:

Acknowledge past failure to treat God properly

Surrender your life to his loving authority

Rely on Jesus alone for acceptance by God

Then pray to God and tell him your decision:

Dear God

*I **Admit** I have tried to ignore you and resisted your right to be in charge. I no longer want to live that way.*

*I **Believe** that Jesus is the Son of God, that his death is the grounds of forgiveness for sinners as a free gift, and that he rose again.*

*I **Commit** from this day forward to follow Jesus as my Lord and Saviour, trusting and obeying him in the knowledge that I am eternally secure in your kingdom.*

Amen.

For further information contact:

***Anglican
Church of
Neutral Bay
on 9953 1830***

Minister:

Rev. Ken Yapp.

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